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Interfacing science and policy, and sharing knowledge

Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2022–2023

**Work programme for the Science-Policy Interface
(2022–2023)**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In line with its mandate, as defined in decisions 23/COP.11 and 19/COP.12, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) provides the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. According to decision 19/COP.13, the SPI is requested to submit through the secretariat a proposal for its work programme for consideration at each regular CST session, with a focus on one or two broad, globally relevant priority topics related to desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD).

In its meeting held between 19–21 October 2021, the SPI reviewed potential topics and emerging issues to be considered for inclusion in its biennium 2022–2023 work programme, based on needs identified during its work over the course of the biennium 2020–2021 and from other emerging issues identified by the secretariat and the SPI. The SPI also reviewed its current coordination activities with other international scientific panels and bodies dealing with DLDD issues. Based on the identified science-policy priorities and the review of coordination activities, the SPI developed a draft work programme for the SPI for the biennium 2022–2023, as contained in this document.

The CST may wish to consider making recommendations to the Conference of the Parties with regard to the proposed SPI work programme for the next biennium in 2022–2023.



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I. Background

1. In line with its mandate, as defined in decisions 23/COP.11 and 19/COP.12, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) provides the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements (e.g. thematic assessments, scientific studies and/or user guides) for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
2. At the fourteenth meeting of the SPI, which took place between 19–21 October 2021,¹ the SPI proposed and reviewed potential topics to be considered for inclusion in its biennium 2022–2023 work programme, drawn from a compilation of science-policy needs identified during the course of SPI work over the biennium 2020–2021, and drawn from other emerging issues identified by the secretariat and the SPI.
3. A summary table of suggested topics is contained in the annex to this document. The topics were clustered by the secretariat to the UNCCD into two major thematic groups addressing different strategic objectives (SO) of the UNCCD. One of the clusters included topics more related to land degradation while the other included topics more related to drought. This clustering was done to ensure the future work programme of the SPI would address one topic under each of these two key priorities of the UNCCD.
4. The identified candidate topics were then screened against the following criteria:
 - (a) Relevance to the mission of the UNCCD: the topic is central to addressing desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD);
 - (b) Added value: the scientific assessment would provide significant added value to the implementation of the UNCCD;
 - (c) Actionability: the level at which Parties could use the results of the scientific assessment to make policies or improve implementation;
 - (d) Knowledge gap: the topic addresses a gap in the assessed and synthesized body of scientific knowledge that limits progress in implementing the UNCCD;
 - (e) Uniqueness: the topic has not been dealt with in earlier SPI reports or reports prepared by other intergovernmental scientific bodies; and
 - (f) Feasibility: the capacity to build upon the outcomes of past SPI work and leverage the assembled expertise of the SPI.
5. The secretariat applied these criteria to each suggested topic to provide the SPI with an indicative guide for their final ranking. The aggregated rankings led to the two priority topics proposed in table 1.
6. Also, during its ninth meeting, the SPI reviewed all of its past and current coordination activities with other international scientific panels and bodies dealing with DLDD issues in order to prioritize the focus of future collaborations and, if necessary, address any gaps identified.
7. As defined in decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 3, and extended in decision 19/COP.12, paragraph 2, the SPI will identify the most optimal way forward (e.g. commissioning an individual or group of experts, organizing expert meetings or encouraging the organization of regional meetings by regional scientific institutions or networks) to address these knowledge requirements in coordination with the secretariat to the UNCCD.
8. This document presents the draft SPI work programme 2022–2023 for consideration at the fifteenth session of the CST and submission to the Conference of the Parties (COP) for adoption.

¹ <https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/14th%20SPI%20Meeting%20Report_final_20211202.pdf>.

II. Draft Science-Policy Interface work programme 2022–2023

9. The draft SPI work programme 2022–2023 consists of two parts: objectives and coordination activities. The objectives part targets specific assessment topics whereas the coordination activities part relates to cooperation with external processes and bodies. An overview of objectives and coordination activities is provided in tables 1 and 2. A budget proposal for the implementation of the SPI work programme 2022–2023 is contained in table 3 and in document ICCD/COP(15)/6-ICCD/CRIC(20)/2.

A. Objectives

1. Objective 1: Provision of science-based evidence on sustainable land use systems and their potential to address desertification/land degradation and drought while also contributing to the achievement of multiple United Nations goals and targets, taking into account environmental, economic and sociocultural conditions.

10. Both the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)² and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)³ have documented unprecedented rates of land use change, highlighting the finite nature of land and underscoring that more than 70 per cent of the global ice-free land surface has been affected by human use. However, the demand for land resources for many completing needs continues to grow, and land conversion can exacerbate land degradation, further amplifying existing environmental and societal challenges.

11. Land use plays a critical role in achieving international commitments for land, climate, biodiversity and sustainable development. However, land degradation currently negatively impacts on the well-being of an estimated 3.2 billion people worldwide while the potential costs of mismanagement in the land use sector are high. The reports by the IPCC and IPBES have demonstrated that governments must leverage synergies and navigate trade-offs to create more sustainable land use systems.

12. These reports also highlight that avoiding and reducing land degradation and restoring degraded land through a holistic and integrated policy approach, such as provided by land degradation neutrality (LDN), can facilitate the achievement of multiple benefits. The required integration takes place on two levels:

(a) Land use planning with the objective of optimizing across multiple objectives and navigating trade-offs, as reported in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/2; and

(b) Response options which, if pursued in an integrated manner, can address DLDD while contributing to sustainable development, enhanced food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation and halting biodiversity loss, as reported in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4.

13. If the land use planning process successfully optimizes the mix of land uses, minimizes trade-offs, and implements the most appropriate mix and placement of response options throughout the landscape, it is assumed that the resulting sustainable land use system will lead to a higher level of ecosystem goods and services and increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to global market volatilities and climate change. However, despite the large body of evidence on current and expected impacts of land use, land use change and land degradation, in practice, sustainable land use systems still play only a minor role in most landscapes. In many cases, their role in the policy domain also appears modest. Moreover, understanding continues to evolve in terms of what constitutes a sustainable land use system and what institutions, strategies, policies and mix of integrated

² IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems (2019) <<https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>>.

³ IPBES assessment report on land degradation and restoration (2018) <<https://www.ipbes.net/assessment-reports/ldr>>.

response options are required to create it at global, national and sub-national levels. A scientific assessment focused on addressing these knowledge gaps can provide Parties with guidance on how to pursue more sustainable land use options.

14. *Rationale:* the topic proposed by the SPI would synthesize the evidence base on what makes sustainable land use systems effective in addressing DLDD while also contributing to the achievement of other environmental and development goals, providing guidance to policy makers. Conducting the proposed SPI objective 1 scientific assessment, as outlined in table 1, would support Parties in their efforts to address SO 1 of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, which is to improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality.⁴

2. Objective 2: Provision of science-based evidence on historical regional and global aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations, and the adaptation approaches that reduce risks to environmental, social and economic systems.

15. The IPCC has reported that drylands have expanded and currently cover around 46.2 per cent (± 0.8 per cent) of the global land area, providing a home to 3 billion people.⁵ Warming rates have been twice as high in drylands as compared to humid lands as the sparse vegetation cover and lower soil moisture of dryland ecosystems amplify temperature, increasing aridity. Globally, soil moisture declined over the 20th century, a trend that is projected to continue under all emission scenarios.⁶ A warmer climate will also intensify very wet and very dry weather and climate events and seasons, with implications for flooding or drought.

16. Drought conditions (frequency, severity and duration) are expected to substantially worsen in global drylands under rising temperatures. The land area affected by increasing drought frequency and severity will expand with increasing global warming and be further exacerbated by poor land management. These effects will be felt most strongly in desert and semi-arid areas through extreme heat events, drought and sand/dust storms, with large-scale aridity trends contributing to expanding drylands and expanding affected populations in some regions.

17. The IPCC projects that further warming will result in increased risk of dryland water scarcity, soil erosion, vegetation loss, wildfire damage and food supply disruptions. The increases in water demand and water scarcity, and associated risks, with impacts on multiple systems and sectors, including cascading risks, are projected to become increasingly severe with increasing temperatures, but will vary across regions. More information on the IPCC findings is available in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4; the relationship between the risk of drought impacts and the assessment of resilience is available in ICCD/COP(15)/CST/3.

18. For many countries and regions around the world, the prospect of expanding global drylands and affected populations is of major concern, as are the related risks of short- or long-term water shortage. However, the magnitude of the projected aridity trends and the regional variations documented in the scientific literature must be synthesized. As the dimension of water stress can stretch from local to national or river basin level, a clearer understanding is necessary of what the changes in aridity will mean for impact risks. In addition, an evaluation of adaptation approaches to reduce associated risk can provide Parties with guidance on how to respond to these increased impact risks.

⁴ See decision 7/COP.13.

⁵ IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems (2019) <<https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>>.

⁶ IPCC Working Group I contribution, Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis (2021) <<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>>.

19. *Rationale:* the Parties to the UNCCD, in the first line of text of the Convention, affirm that human beings in affected or threatened areas are at the centre of concerns to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.⁷ The projected expansion of global drylands will influence the size of the affected areas referenced in article 2 of the Convention, as well as the affected populations referenced in article 4. In addition, conducting the proposed SPI objective 2 scientific assessment as outlined in table 1 would support Parties in their efforts to address SO 3 of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, which is to mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems.⁸

Table 1
Objectives and deliverables of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2022–2023

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
1. Provision of science-based evidence on sustainable land use systems and their potential to address desertification/land degradation and drought while also contributing to the achievement of multiple United Nations goals and targets, taking into account environmental, economic and sociocultural conditions.	<p>A technical report, based on a review of existing synthesis reports and the primary literature, which provides (a) a typology of sustainable land use systems, including their capacity to enhance ecosystem goods and services, to be less vulnerable to system volatility and shocks while addressing social inequities; (b) an analysis of the potential of sustainable land use systems to reconcile different United Nations goals and targets that compete for land resources; and (c) an assessment of the contextual applicability of these land use options across the globe, including barriers and opportunities as well as the possibility for broader diffusion.</p> <p>Provision of scientific assistance to the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to support decisions on the technical feasibility of integrated land use planning, sustainable land management and land restoration.</p>
2. Provision of science-based evidence on the historical regional and global aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations and the adaptation approaches that reduce risks to environmental, social and economic systems.	<p>A technical report, based on a review of existing synthesis reports and the primary literature, which provides (a) science-based evidence on the existing approaches for the quantification and assessment of hydro-climate aridity; (b) the determination of its regional and global changes and future projections; (c) the resulting historical changes and future projections in impact risk, including from extreme heat events, drought and dust storms as well as higher risk of desertification, water scarcity, soil erosion, vegetation loss, wildfire damage and food supply disruptions; and (d) an evaluation of adaptation approaches that can reduce associated risk.</p> <p>Provision of scientific assistance to the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to support decisions on the technical feasibility of initiatives focused on building resilience to the effects of drought.</p>

⁷ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-01/UNCCD_Convention_ENG_0.pdf>.

⁸ See decision 7/COP.13.

B. Coordination activities

20. During the biennium 2022–2023, the SPI is also proposing to undertake the following coordination activities:

1. Coordination Activity 1: Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services within the framework of its rolling work programme up to 2030 and in accordance with the procedures established in the Memorandum of Cooperation with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

21. In decision 19/COP.13, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to continue to contribute to and cooperate with IPBES. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Cooperation between the secretariats of IPBES and the UNCCD was signed in January 2019. The rolling work programme of IPBES up to 2030⁹ includes two topics relevant to the UNCCD, with three reports that will be relevant to future UNCCD policy development. They are set to be scientifically reviewed by the SPI in the biennium 2022–2023, as outlined in table 2.

2. Coordination Activity 2: Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change within the framework of its agenda, particularly regarding its Sixth Assessment Report.

22. In decision 19/COP.13, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to continue to contribute to and cooperate with the IPCC. In the 2020–2021 biennium, the SPI undertook scientific peer review activities to support the IPCC's working group II and working group III contributions to the Sixth Assessment Report on climate change adaptation and mitigation, respectively (ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4). These two reports have key messages relevant to the UNCCD, which will be analysed by the SPI as part of the 2022–2023 work programme, as outlined in table 2.

3. Coordination Activity 3: Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils within the framework of its work programme.

23. In decision 19/COP.13, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to continue to contribute to and cooperate with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS). Under the SPI 2020–2021 work programme, activities were undertaken to further strengthen cooperation with the ITPS (ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4). As outlined in table 2, cooperation during the 2022–2023 biennium will continue on topics jointly agreed by the SPI and the ITPS, including follow-up activities emerging from the conclusions resulting from past soils symposia, and potential participation in future symposia relevant to the UNCCD. The SPI will also contribute to the scientific review of the proposed second edition of the report, entitled *The Status of the World's Soil Resources*.

4. Coordination Activity 4: Cooperate with the International Resources Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme within the framework of its work programme.

24. In decisions 18/COP.13 and 21/COP.13, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to contribute to and cooperate with the International Resources Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-IRP). Under the SPI 2020–2021 work programme, the SPI contributed to several UNEP-IRP activities and reports. As outlined in table 2, cooperation during the 2022–2023 biennium will continue on topics jointly agreed by the SPI and the UNEP-IRP, including the scientific review of the rapid study and assessment, *Defining Sustainable Levels of Resource Use (Science-Based Targets)*; and the *Global Resources Outlook 2023* report.

⁹ IPBES/7/L.5.

5. Coordination Activity 5: Cooperate with the Global Land Indicators Initiative of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme which aims to achieve globally comparable monitoring of land governance by 2030.

25. In decision 21/COP.13, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to cooperate with the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to ensure the harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII in order to measure tenure security, with land indicators used to measure progress towards LDN. In the 2020–2021 biennium, the SPI cooperated with the GLII to ensure the harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII and UNCCD land-based progress indicators (ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4). As outlined in table 2, the SPI will continue its cooperation in the 2022–2023 biennium to ensure harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII, and land indicators used for measuring progress towards LDN.

6. Coordination Activity 6: Cooperate with the Integrated Drought Management Programme, a joint initiative of the World Meteorological Organization and the Global Water Partnership, on scientific issues related to drought.

26. In decision 18/COP.14, the COP requested the SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to cooperate with the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) on scientific issues related to drought. During the biennium 2020–2021, the SPI ensured the coherence and relevance of SPI work on drought, particularly towards the IDMP’s second pillar of drought management: vulnerability and impact assessment (ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4). As outlined in table 2, in the 2022–2023 biennium the SPI will collaborate on topics to be jointly agreed by the SPI and the IDMP.

7. Coordination Activity 7: Assume a primary role in the quality assurance of a possible third edition of the Global Land Outlook and review and, as appropriate, contribute to the development of other evidence-based communications.

27. The Global Land Outlook (GLO) is a flagship publication of the UNCCD on the status of land and its use. In the 2020–2021 biennium, the SPI assumed a primary role in the quality assurance of the second edition of the GLO (ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4) and will do the same in the planning of a possible third edition, during the biennium 2022–2023, as outlined in table 2.

Table 2
Coordination activities of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2022–2023

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Sub-activities</i>
1. Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) within the framework of its rolling work programme up to 2030 and in accordance with the procedures established in the Memorandum of Cooperation with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).	<p>The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) will follow up on two thematic assessments and one technical paper prioritized in the IPBES rolling work programme up to 2030:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A thematic assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health (Nexus Assessment); (b) A thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity (Transformative Change Assessment); and (c) A technical paper on the interlinkage between biodiversity and climate change. <p>The SPI will contribute to the scientific review of these reports. The SPI will also conduct an analysis of the key messages relevant to the UNCCD and present the results at the 16th session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 16) if these reports become available in time for the SPI to complete the review.</p>

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Sub-activities</i>
2. Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) within the framework of its agenda, particularly regarding its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6).	<p>The SPI will conduct, for presentation at CST 16, an analysis of the key messages relevant to the UNCCD from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The contribution of Working Group II to the AR6 on Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability; and (b) The contribution of Working Group III to the AR6 on Mitigation of Climate Change.
3. Cooperate with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) within the framework of its work programme.	<p>The SPI will contribute to the scientific review of the proposed second edition of the report, <i>The Status of the World's Soil Resources</i>.</p> <p>The SPI will cooperate with the ITPS on topics to be jointly agreed by the SPI and the ITPS, including any follow-up activities emerging from the conclusions of past global symposia on soil organic carbon, soil erosion, soil biodiversity, and soil salinity.</p> <p>The SPI should explore with the ITPS potential participation in future symposia relevant to the UNCCD, including the Global Symposium on Soils for Nutrition, the Global Symposium on Soil and Water and the Global Symposium on Soil Sealing and Urban Soils.</p>
4. Cooperate with the International Resources Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-IRP) within the framework of its work programme.	<p>The SPI will follow up on two of the prioritized topics of the UNEP-IRP 2022–2025 work programme focused on current trends and future prospects for global resource use and sustainable resource management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The rapid study and assessment, <i>Defining Sustainable Levels of Resource Use (Science-Based Targets)</i>; and (b) The <i>Global Resources Outlook 2023</i> report. <p>The SPI will contribute to the scientific review of these reports. The SPI will also conduct an analysis of the key messages relevant to the UNCCD and present the results at CST 16 if these reports become available in time for the SPI to complete the review.</p>
5. Cooperate with the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, which aims to achieve globally comparable monitoring of land governance by 2030.	<p>The SPI will provide inputs to GLII and UNCCD efforts to ensure harmonization of land governance indicators and land degradation indicators, as relevant to both GLII and the UNCCD.</p>
6. Cooperate with the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP), a joint initiative of the World Meteorological Organization and the Global Water Partnership, on scientific issues related to drought.	<p>The SPI will collaborate with the IDMP on topics to be jointly agreed by the SPI and the IDMP, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the harmonization of drought resilience terminology and definitions; (b) the enhancement of methodological approaches to monitoring and assessing drought risk in natural and managed ecosystems; and (c) the systematic integration of the findings from drought resilience assessments into drought early warning systems.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Sub-activities</i>
7. Assume a primary role in the quality assurance of a possible third edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO 3) and review and, as appropriate, contribute to the development of other evidence-based communications.	The SPI will be a member of the GLO steering committee, contribute to and undertake a scientific review of a possible GLO 3 and all related documents, approve the final versions prior to publication, and be invited to review and, as appropriate, contribute to the development of other UNCCD evidence-based communications.

C. Budget

28. The total budget needed for the implementation of the SPI work programme in the biennium 2022–2023 is EUR 516,725. Information on the estimated cost of the work of the SPI is contained in table 3 and in document ICCD/COP(15)/6-ICCD/CRIC(20)/2. Parties may note that the proposed core budget for the SPI and the available extra-budgetary resources cover just EUR 270,397 of the total estimated budget of EUR 516,725 needed for the full implementation of the work programme. Parties may therefore decide to either make additional resources available or to prioritize the proposed objectives and activities based on available resources.

Table 3

Budget of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2022–2023

<i>Objective/Activity</i>	<i>Source of funds</i>	<i>Cost (euros)</i>
Objectives and coordination activities	Extra-budgetary	400 000
Annual meetings of the Science-Policy Interface	Core budget	116 725
Total		516 725
Less: proposed core budget		116 725
Less: available extra-budgetary resources		153 672
Budget gap		(246 328)

III. Conclusions and recommendations

29. Two thematic assessment topics have been prioritized by the SPI for inclusion in its biennium 2022–2023 work programme. The first is focused on a scientific assessment of sustainable land use systems and their potential to address DLDD while also contributing to the achievement of multiple United Nations goals and targets, taking into account environmental, economic and sociocultural conditions. The second is focused on a scientific assessment of the historical regional and global aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations and the adaptation approaches that reduce risks to environmental, social and economic systems.

30. Seven coordination activities have also been prioritized by the SPI. Six of these involve cooperation with other scientific panels and bodies and the other involves the assumption of a primary role in the quality assurance of a possible third edition of the GLO.

31. The CST may wish to consider these conclusions when engaging in consultations on a draft decision for the COP based on the draft text for negotiations which can be found in ICCD/COP(15)/CST/8 and which, following decision 32/COP.14, contains all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at CST 15.

Annex

Summary of topics proposed for inclusion in the Science-Policy Interface work programme for the biennium 2022–2023

In its meeting held between 19–21 October 2021, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) discussed a number of potential topics to be considered for inclusion in its biennium 2022–2023 work programme. These topics were drawn from a compilation of science-policy needs identified during the course of SPI work over the biennium 2020–2021 and a set of emerging issues identified by the secretariat and the SPI. All topics were clustered into two major thematic groups, with one set more related to land degradation and the other more related to drought.

- (a) Topics more related to land degradation:
 - (i) Effectiveness/return on investment of sustainable land management and land restoration;
 - (ii) Define sustainable land use options that reconcile different United Nations targets simultaneously;
 - (iii) Emerging agroecological approaches to sustainable land and water management and restoration;
 - (iv) Resilience and urban-rural dynamics (e.g. food systems, value chains and ecological connectivity);
 - (v) Interlinked land use/conservation/climate change policy effectiveness;
 - (vi) Economic potential of gender and youth-inclusive approaches to land restoration;
 - (vii) Demand/supply and value chain management practices for a lower environmental footprint;
 - (viii) Future land degradation and the retrieval of permanent ice/snow surfaces;
 - (ix) Sand and dust storm source mitigation; and
 - (x) Quantifying the relative contribution and interaction of land degradation drivers;
- (b) Topics more related to drought:
 - (i) Aridity trends and the expansion of affected areas;
 - (ii) Drought-influenced impacts that contribute to land degradation (e.g. wildfire, invasive species);
 - (iii) The drought – land degradation – climate change nexus;
 - (iv) Harmonization of drought resilience terminology and definitions; and
 - (v) Drought impacts on hydrological systems affecting ecosystems, agriculture and water resource availability.